

**Talbot County Tourism Board
Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, June 10, 2020

8:30 a.m.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81101841522?pwd=TGhySHI5T2RWbE5iVjA0VVJCaGwwUT09>

Meeting ID: 811 0184 1522

Password: 624719

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

Board Members Present: Judy Bixler, Kelley Cox, Angela Eade, Ian Fleming, Laura Price, Mark Salter, Ben Simons, Kim Weller, Cassandra Vanhooser

Board Members Absent: Harold Klinger, Jeff Schneider, Al Silverstein

Recording Secretary: Candace Harris

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the May meeting were presented. Angela Eade moved that the minutes be accepted with any necessary corrections. Ian Fleming seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

III. Old Business

COVID-19 Response: Ms. Vanhooser said that she continues to host private-sector calls from the Emergency Operations Center as part of the county's COVID-19 response. The last call featured Debbie Walsworth, a CPA with CBIZ, who talked about the Paycheck Protection Program that Congress passed. Private-sector calls will now be once a week on Tuesdays, because the numbers have gradually dropped. Ms. Vanhooser writes many of the press releases for the EOC designed to keep the public informed.

Chesapeake Bay Magazine Special Section: Ms. Vanhooser showed the cover of the June issue of *Chesapeake Bay Magazine* which includes a 14-page special section on Talbot County. The '20 for '20 section would have been the editorial for the 2020 Talbot County Travel Guide. Ms. Vanhooser said she and her team of freelance writers quickly rewrote the section to reflect travel restrictions imposed by COVID-19. She has gotten a number of kudos from others in the hospitality industry for this product.

Visitors Center: The Talbot County Visitors Center remains closed to the public. Ms. Price reported that Monday, June 17, 2020, all County employees who have been working from home will return to the office and on Wednesday, June 19, 2020, all County buildings will reopen to the public. Ms. Vanhooser reported that she will wait to hear from the County Manager about reopening the Visitors Center and that she had proposed that the public facing portion of the office not open until the last week in June.

Ms. Vanhooser also reported that the Visitors Center has been cleaned, masks have been ordered, 6 ft. signs on the floor have been added, and a hand sanitizer station has been installed by the front door for when the public returns. She will ask the health officer if the staff needs to take visitors names when visiting in case of COVID-19. The staffing issues have not been resolved yet, so there is still no Saturday person. A draft plan has been put together to recruit volunteers, but has been put on hold because of COVID-19.

Ms. Price inquired if visitor material was available in areas around town since the Visitors Center is closed. Ms. Vanhooser stated that we are not set up for that and most people look online for visitor information. The staff spends most of their time keeping the website and social media current.

Ms. Price asked if the Department of Economic Development and Tourism is utilizing the digital sign at the Community Center. Ms. Vanhooser stated that she would speak to Mr. Peper about that.

IV. New Business

Talbot CARES Small Business Grant Program: Ms. Vanhooser reported that Monday, June 8, 2020, the office launched its Talbot CARES Small Business Grant Program. The County received \$6.4 million from the CARES Act, half of which will go toward public health initiatives. The other half went to the County Council to disburse. A total of \$1.2 million will be used to fund the small business grant program and \$1.2 million to an individual assistance program.

About 55 businesses currently have applied currently. The businesses are eligible to receive up to \$10,000. These grants MUST be used to address needs caused by COVID-19. The county is reinvesting back into the community to get some help to the businesses. The individual program is also available to help people with rent, utilities, and other expenses they cannot pay. This information can be shared with employees of some of the businesses that are in need.

V. Representatives from each of the towns reported on news and events taking place in their jurisdictions.

VI. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:56 am. The next meeting will be held on September 9 at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom.